

# Tips for Preventing Underage Drinking

1. Encourage your children to practice saying "no" and talk to them about the best ways to get out of uncomfortable situations. Help them come up with responses they can give when they are offered alcohol. Some examples include, "No, I don't want a beer, I have to stay in shape for my sports team." Or, "No thanks, I'd rather drink a soda."
2. Listen to your kids. When you make an effort to listen, you create an environment where your children will feel more comfortable voicing their concerns. According to the National Institute on Drug Abuse, the best time to start talking to your children about alcohol is age 12, but it's never too late.
3. Set firm rules. Ask when they are going out, who they will be with, what they will be doing and which adult will be supervising.
4. Explain clearly that drinking under the age of 21 has both legal and real-life consequences along with a potential loss of control and judgment, and health, social and safety risks. For teens, it may also be a good idea to stress that there may be additional consequences, which can include removal from a sports team, a permanent criminal record impacting scholastic and professional pursuits and/or serious injury to themselves or friends. Even if they do not drink, warn them of the potential consequences of getting into a car with someone who has been drinking alcohol.
5. Role-play with them about how to get themselves out of dangerous situations, such as being confronted with alcohol at a party or when a friend who has been drinking wants to drive. Keep an eye out for any symptoms of alcohol abuse such as withdrawal from family and friends, dropping grades, or missing money.
6. If you consume alcohol, set an example for your children by doing so responsibly and pledging not to provide alcohol to youth.
7. Monitor your child's online activities and credit card activities if they have a credit card. Today, it's easier than ever for children to get their hands on alcohol. The Internet has created a new way for alcohol retailers to bypass underage drinking safeguards on the sale of alcohol. Some Web sites will ship alcohol to your doorstep as long as the purchaser checks an online box saying they are 21. So, be careful and be aware of any suspicious packages received by your teen or any questionable line items on your teen's credit card bill statements.